

Coping Flexibility and Psychological Flexibility/Inflexibility in Personality Disorder Traits

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Personality disorders are the exaggeration of normal personality traits that are inflexible and maladaptive. Coping flexibility refers to individual differences in the use of different coping strategies and the ability to use this variability in coping responses in a manner that is adaptive to changes in life circumstances. Psychological flexibility is the individual ability to alter internal experiences by responding flexibly to negative thoughts, emotions and events and thereby increase well-being and adaptive functioning. While there is literature on personality disorders and coping, there is very little research on how these disorders are related to coping flexibility or psychological flexibility. It was predicted that in a correlational study with undergraduate students, there will be a negative association between personality disorder and coping flexibility and psychological flexibility. Overall, these predictions were confirmed, first with coping rigidity correlating with several of the personality disorders. Secondly, multiple coping strategy use was negatively related to the antisocial, avoidant, borderline and dependent personality disorder scales. Thirdly, personality disorder was related to psychological inflexibility. With the specific inflexibility scales, inaction and fusion were the major predictors of the PD scales. These results add to the understanding of the relationship between personality disorders, coping inflexibility and psychological inflexibility. They may also provide insight into methods to increase coping flexibility, psychological flexibility and reduce the maladaptive outcomes associated with personality disorders.

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